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SUBJECT: BAD TRAFFICKING PRESS CAUSES GOVERNMENT ACTION

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Recent negative press in the international and local media about trafficking cases and the badly regulated adoption system has spurred government action. The Minister of Labor held a special anti-human trafficking taskforce meeting on November 29 to develop a new draft strategy, which was approved on December 5, and to review existing cases. The President had tasked Minister Woods to be more directly involved with the taskforce, which falls under his ministry. Post is hopeful that this is the impetus for the taskforce to become more proactive in the fight against human trafficking. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) Minister of Labor Kofi Woods, under pressure from the President, called an emergency meeting of the anti-human trafficking taskforce on November 29, which PolOff attended. A new draft strategy, which was approved by the Minister on December 5, will focus the taskforce in four areas: prevention and awareness raising, law enforcement, legislative and legal frameworks, and victim protection and assistance. The strategy requires different government agencies (Justice, Labor, Liberia National Police (LNP) and others) to work more closely and share information on trafficking cases. The strategy also proposes an executive order to ban inter-country adoptions until a new adoption law can be passed by the legislature.

13. (U) At the November 29 meeting the secretariat reported the arrest of Francis Doeboyoyou for alleged trafficking of 30 - 50 children within Liberia. The children were taken from the Peace Orphanage Home in Monrovia by the LNP and members of the taskforce. Doeboyoyou had promised the parents of the children that he would sponsor and educate them for 10 years. In exchange the parents gave him 750 Liberian dollars (12.50 USD). He is currently being held at Monrovia Central Prison. The children are being housed at a local NGO, Don Bosco Homes, until the investigation is completed and the children can be returned to their parents. While they are there the Woman and Child Protection Unit of the LNP is providing protection, the Ministry of Education is coordinating the children's schooling in Monrovia and in the counties when they return home. Save the Children UK is tracking down their parents.

14. (U) Three other cases were discussed. In the first, Lofa County officials are investigating the legitimacy of an Islamic school in the county where 50 children are living. The second involves a child from Guinea who was being brought for sale by two Guineans who were arrested by law enforcement in Lofa. The government is working with the Guinean government to repatriate the child. The third case involves a school in Grand Cape Mount County that is being investigated for possible trafficking.

5.(U) COMMENT: A recent BBC radio report and article on adoptions from Liberia, which portrayed the adoption system in a negative light, seems to be the impetus for the meeting and new strategy. The Minister indicated at the meeting that the President was following the issue closely. The anti-human trafficking task force seems eager to tackle the trafficking and adoption issues. The taskforce, which PolOff is a member of, has been meeting since 2006 but only started holding monthly meeting in 2008. Until now the taskforce has concentrated on awareness raising and tracking cases. Hopefully the focus on investigations and arrests will lead to convictions under the trafficking in persons law enacted in 2005 and to a more urgent focus on the need to reform adoption law and

procedures.

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